



Press Release

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Can consumers trust website accessibility declarations?

A new study for ANEC by the University of Middlesex (United Kingdom), reveals that consumers and public authorities should doubt claims about the accessibility of websites to people with disabilities. The study also points to a very low level of accessible websites in Europe. "Only 3 websites out of 76 government and public body websites certified by a third-party were accessible, while none of the commercial websites out of 24 that had self-declared could be considered accessible", noted ANEC Secretary-General, Stephen Russell.

Released at a public event, hosted by the European Standards Organisations¹ on European Accessibility Requirements for public procurement of ICT products and services, the study investigated the use of declarations of accessibility and the differences between third-party certification by a independent body and self-declaration by the website owner. The study looked at 100 websites of public and private organisations across five European countries.

"Many services are being offered to consumers through the internet, sometimes exclusively or on preferential terms. Hence it is essential, particularly in the case of public services, that websites are accessible to all consumers. Sadly, that is far from the case today. Where websites provide a declaration of accessibility, those claims must be reliable for consumers and be measureable against authoritative standards", added Mr Russell.

The study proposes how the present low level of web accessibility could be improved and makes recommendations to web-designers, website owners and certifiers on increasing accessibility. ANEC will use the results of the study to contribute to current work on the standardisation of web accessibility in order achieve benefits for all consumers².

The results of the ANEC study can be found at <http://www.anec.eu/attachments/ANEC-R&T-2011-ICT-002finalrev.pdf>

ENDS

¹ CEN (www.cen.eu), CENELEC (www.cenelec.eu), ETSI (www.etsi.org)

² Mandate M/376 – Standardisation Mandate to CEN, CENELEC & ETSI in support of European Accessibility Requirements for Public Procurement of Products and Services in the ICT domain.

ANEC in brief

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, representing and defending consumer interests in the processes of standardisation and certification, as well as in related legislation. ANEC was set up in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and represents consumer organisations from the 27 EU Member States, 3 EFTA countries and Croatia. ANEC is funded by the EU and the EFTA Secretariat, while national consumer organisations contribute in kind. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.

More information: www.anec.eu

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